

such as pooling vehicles and combining administrative operations could provide significantly better transportation services.” (4). Often, rural communities have a few small providers independently serving specific segments of the population based on funding regulations. Coordination allows these providers to meet the various needs of the community while “focusing on reducing duplication and fragmentation in operating, administering, planning, and funding transportation services” (4). In the long-run this practice allows agencies to pool resources, and the cost savings can be reallocated to address the unmet travel needs within the community. While coordinating services may initially be a complicated task, the system will realize greater efficiency and service in the long run.

South Central Illinois Mass Transit is an example of an inter-agency rural provider that serves 2,600 square miles in five counties. The system operates 50 vehicles, and it provides well over a quarter million trips annually (4). The coordination of services has been credited with providing trips that are less expensive for the customers and agencies, and it is serving areas that did not have access previously.

Conclusion

As the cost of gasoline and ridership continue to climb, public transportation providers throughout the state are being forced to find ways to stretch their budgets. Fuel costs are having a huge impact upon operating budgets, but these techniques should help fund public transit and better serve the needs of the growing customer base. ▲

Webex: New training resource for drug & alcohol testing



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by Jacob Bustad
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The amount of responsibility attached to drug and alcohol testing also means that specific training is required for those charged with this responsibility—supervisors and others—must be trained to both understand and execute the testing policies. A new resource from The Mental Health Consortium (TMHC) Services, Inc. provides a different way to access this training, online, through the Webex training program. TMHC is the third party administrator for the KDOT drug and alcohol testing program, and KDOT has continually worked with TMHC to make required training more accessible and flexible.

The Webex program was developed to address the need for flexible training. Online classes are offered each month, where trainees attend a virtual classroom while the class is taught from another location. Also, pre-recorded training sessions can be downloaded and viewed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“The Webex program came about because TMHC staff had used

it for a training session online, and we thought it might be useful for training supervisors and employees,” Tom Swayne of TMHC said. “Obviously it has benefits for a small business or agency, because it cuts down on travel costs, which is good for both local agencies and instructors like myself.”

According to Swayne, the Webex program currently consists of live sessions offered on two Wednesdays of each month, as well as some pre-recorded sessions available for download. Swayne said that while the pre-recorded sessions will probably be updated with better sound and slides, the ease of use is

Supervisors or employees can simply download the video file and Webex software, and watch the file on a computer anytime they like.

the biggest benefit. Supervisors or employees can simply download the video file and Webex software, and watch the file on a computer anytime they like.

Individual agencies can also set up an independent session in which employees, supervisors or the entire agency gather around one or more computers as Swayne presents his information. Some agencies adjust the session to their schedules by having it take place after regular hours, allowing everyone to attend.

“We’ve had great results doing this with agencies from Oklahoma,

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and some Kansas agencies as well.” Swayne said.

Cheryl Fisher, Drug and Alcohol Program Manager at KDOT, explained the benefits of the Webex program for the many parties involved.

“KDOT and TMHC Services, Inc. are working together to make the mandatory trainings convenient for rural providers. WebEx is one step in accomplishing this task,” Fisher said. “The flexibility of being able to provide trainings to employees without traveling to a location is one of the biggest advantages to utilizing WebEx. This service will help cut down on costs for providers and make it easier to be in compliance with the training requirements.”

Check out the Webex program at http://www.tmhcservices.com/DrugTesting/drugtesting_DOT.htm. Click on the Webex Training Center logo at the bottom left of the page. Or you can contact either Tom Swayne (tswayne@tmhcservices.com) or Cheryl Fisher (cherylfi@ksdot.org) with questions or for more information. ▲

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local community and carry the concept through to implementation. The local champion must gain the political and financial support to begin exploring public transportation feasibility for the community. Timeframe: 12 months.

Step 2. Feasibility analysis.

The feasibility analysis is a preliminary examination of the community's demographics and socio-economic conditions to determine if public transportation is feasible. The analysis also looks at general service

options, potential funding sources, and estimated expenses. The analysis should tie into the community's Long Range Transportation Planning (LRTP) process. Timeframe: 12 months.

Step 3. Transit conceptual planning (TCP). TCP builds upon the feasibility analysis and provides more detailed, system-level transit service planning and forecasts. Timeframe: 12 months.

Step 4. Operations plan. The operations plan builds upon the transit conceptual plan and provides specific details for the operation and

The operations plan gives the community a specific blueprint of who the service will serve, routing plans, hours and days of service, the type, size and number of vehicles, operating and capital expenses requirements, and identified funding.

implementation of transit service. The operations plan includes a detailed service plan, specific financial details and requirements, required data collection processes, and details related to vehicle requirements. At the completion of the operations plan, the community will have a specific blue print of who the service will serve, routing plans, hours and days of service, the type, size and number of vehicles, operating and capital expenses requirements, and identified funding sources. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 5. Organization and management structure. Deciding on the operations and management structure, done concurrently with the operations plan, will determine how the system will be administered (in-house or using an outside firm). Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 6A. Selection process for a general manager. If it's decided to

run the system in-house, a general manager needs to be selected and hired. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 6B. Request for Proposal (RFP Process). If in Step 4, it is decided to hire an outside firm to management the operations, a RFP has to be prepared. The RFP needs to include all the required federal, state and local contract clauses, and the contract parameters. It details what certifications and documentation are required, asks for a firm's history and track record, asks firms to commit to a detailed management team, defines the responsibilities and expectations, details projected expenses, defines desired performance measures and expectations, details financial, accounting, and proposed training and safety programs. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 7. Service implementation preparation.

After a general manager is hired or a firm is selected, steps have to be taken to implement the service. These steps include, among others, re-examining the proposed schedule, deciding on fares, assigning drivers and vehicles to specific routes, deciding on a communication system, recruiting and training employees, and developing standard operation procedures. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 8. Start of service. After the service is implemented, it is important to continue to plan, evaluate and adjust transit services and procedures, and ensure that local, state, and federal grant requirements and regulations are being followed.

Source: *Guidebook for Start-Up Transit Agencies*, July 2006, National Center for Transit Research, University of South Florida. ▲